

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Wide Eyed Images

Club for One

by Lu Donovan

In a corner cellar room underneath the Queen Memorial Building, I'm sitting in a room of duct tape mannequins. Fellow audience members stare back at me as we sip mini gin cocktails. House and techno beats vibrate off the cinder block walls and the DJ, [Saint Manifest](#), has had a full face smile since the start.

"If he's a boy we'll name him..."

If she's a girl we'll name her..."

If they're a frog we'll name them Kermit."

[Thomas Choinacky*](#), creator and solo performer of Speakeasy Go-go, welcomes the audience. They chant "H-E-R-E," bringing us into the shared time and space as they storytell, play duct tape dress up, and shake their hips in the center of the tiny room. The beginning of the show transports to the various "heres" Choinacky's occupied: their childhood bedroom, middle school hallway, and college dorm room. At each place they share a secret pastime, a story that feels shockingly sincere. Though at times they tripped over their speech, it's during these very knotted-up moments I'm grateful to be present. I even appreciate watching Choinacky assemble duct tape underwear for a too-long 10 minutes, as their lanky arms struggle to reach the underspot of their left booty cheek.

Being present with them is, on one hand, a gift. Any opportunity to witness a body and a story in their fullest truth is a treasure. Then they change into another pair of short-shorts and they take a sip of water and the music gets louder and...

Choinacky becomes the tour guide at an imagined Berlin night club, one that's adorned with a kinky toy table, a Go-go cage, and

shadowy crevices for public sexy time. They spend the final fifteen minutes gyrating to the DJ's music, transporting themselves to that very club, another memory of their past. The program poses the show as "an opportunity to live joyfully and shamelessly, in this temporary space we hold together." We're invited to "claim your hotness and sexiness!" Yet, sitting upright in a plastic chair, I'm on the outside of this ecstasy, holding space for Choinacky as they experience theirs. Unfortunately, the touchy sincerity from the beginning is lost, and I'm wondering why I've been watching them grind their hips and shimmy their shoulders for so long.

Feeling a quandary in my sternum, a sternum that also belongs to a white-bodied queer person, I know I saw reflections of my own dances onstage. As I leave the show, I'm brought back to a question I turn over time and time again: what does it do to bear witness to a white-bodied queer person move in their pleasure?

[Speakeasy Go-go](#), Thomas Choinacky, Queen Memorial Building, Philadelphia, Fringe Festival 2021, Sept. 10- Sept. 25

*Thomas Choinacky has written for thINKingDANCE since 2017.

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